

NC, the Community Culinary School, which I visited last month, recruits students from social service agencies, homeless shelters, halfway houses and work release programs. Just around the corner from the U.S. Capitol, students are hard at work in the DC Central Kitchen's culinary job training class. This is a model program, which began in 1990, and it is always a privilege for me to go over to the Kitchen and meet with folks who have faced great adversity but are now on track for a meaningful career. Earlier this year, I visited on their graduation day, and the graduates were so excited they were dancing in the kitchen. They were ready to start good jobs.

Of course, for the DC Central Kitchen, Charlotte Community Culinary School and other hunger relief organizations to carry out their mission, they must have food. To this end, I am very pleased that Senator GRASSLEY and Senator LUGAR have joined me as cosponsors of my food donation amendment included in the managers package. My thanks to Chairman BAUCUS, and a special thank you to Ranking Member GRASSLEY, as well as their staffs, for working with me in this effort. My amendment addresses four tax issues that will encourage food donations and volunteering to help the hungry.

First, my amendment extends a provision from the Pension Protection Act that allows any taxpayer to claim an enhanced deduction for donations of food. This deduction is set to expire at the end of the year; my amendment extends it for 2 additional years.

Second, my amendment allows restaurants to qualify for this deduction. Unfortunately, a drafting error excluded most restaurants from utilizing this deduction due to their tax structure. My amendment corrects this problem and provides restaurants with an extra incentive to donate food for hunger relief.

Third, it simplifies the rules that allow farmers and ranchers to take advantage of this deduction for donating their products.

Finally, my amendment allows volunteers to receive a tax deduction for mileage incurred while transporting food donations. As a former President of the American Red Cross, I know first hand the importance of volunteers—there would be no Red Cross without the 1.3 million volunteers—and I understand that many charities, like Meals on Wheels, depend on volunteers using their personal vehicles to deliver food to countless tables across the country.

In addition, volunteers who glean and transport food could benefit from this tax deduction measure. Excess crops that would otherwise be plowed under or thrown out are taken from farms and other entities and distributed to the needy. In the Old Testament, in the book of Ruth, we learn that she gleaned in the fields so that her family could eat.

Each year in this country, 96 billion pounds of good, nutritious food is left

over or thrown away. Gleaning helps eliminate this waste. I have gleaned a number of times with an organization called the Society of St. Andrew, the latest being sweet potatoes in Harnett County, NC, in October.

While I have a number of concerns about the farm bill and its impact on North Carolina agriculture, I welcome this bill's hunger and nutrition focus. Especially at this beautiful season of giving and thanksgiving we should remember our 35 million fellow Americans who are struggling just to have enough to eat. The bill's provisions will help us keep up the fight in the battle against hunger. This is a campaign that cannot be won in months, or even a few years, but with a caring Government and a caring people working together, ending hunger in America is certainly a victory within reach.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate go to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORTGAGE FORGIVENESS DEBT RELIEF ACT OF 2007

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 3648, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3648) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude discharges of indebtedness on principal residences from gross income, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to, the bill as amended be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 3856), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to, as follows:

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 3648), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, this is a very important measure we have adopted in the Senate. In fact, today is a very important day for families all across the United States who find themselves in this mortgage crisis that we have been hearing about, that we have been talking about, that we have been meeting about. Two important actions have taken place that will make a real difference in people's lives today. The first was, earlier today, modernization of the Federal Housing Authority, the FHA.

This had not been updated since the 1930s when people were in another time of tremendous crisis, losing their homes.

We have come together today and put forward modernization that will allow more people to be able to get refinancing, to be able to get help and support from the FHA, to be able to keep their homes. That is what we all want, the American dream of keeping our homes, of making sure our families have a roof over their head, that we can invest in equity in a home as part of creating that middle-class dream for ourselves, for our families, and it is how we strengthen the community when we have home ownership.

That is an important piece, and we just adopted the other piece that is very significant, particularly time-sensitive, and that is to make sure that no one who finds themselves in a mortgage foreclosure this year, in 2007, or finds themselves having to refinance their home below the value of their mortgage or through a short sale find themselves in a situation where, on top of losing their home or losing money, they have another tax bill.

Right now, up until the action we took a few moments ago, taxpayers, families across America, would find themselves, for example, in a situation of, if they had a \$100,000 mortgage and they refinanced at \$80,000 or the bank sold their home on a foreclosure at \$80,000, they would find themselves paying taxes on that difference between \$100,000 and \$80,000, that \$20,000 difference. If it was forgiven by the lender, they would pay taxes on that as if it were income. That makes no sense when families are challenged, facing the loss of their homes, struggling to make ends meet—we are coming up to Christmas now—when families are struggling to make sure they have what we all want, to be able to give our children a wonderful Christmas, to be able to have a home for them, a place for the Christmas tree.

There are too many families who now find themselves in a real crisis. I am very grateful to everyone who has been involved in getting us to this point. We have now said loudly and clearly that we understand and we are not going to allow families to have an additional